

REMARKS

Please cancel claims 1-18, and add claims 34-48.

None of the applied references, when taken alone or in combination, anticipates claims 34-48 of the present patent application. The claims and one or more of the described embodiments of the present invention are generally directed to a multi-tier communications system in which a host can control a remote unit through a first-tier base station and a plurality of second-tier base stations. The second-tier base stations are adapted to communicate with each other without requiring intervention or facilitation by the first-tier base station. As described in the patent application, a plurality of second-tier base stations may be strung together to extend the range of communications by the host. For example, Figure 4 of the patent application illustrates that a plurality of second-tier base stations may, in one embodiment, be "serially" coupled to control the door locks on a given floor of a hotel. In Figure 4, the first-tier base station 450 communicates with first second-tier base station 460, which can then wirelessly communicate with another second-tier base station 470 to control the door locks on the distant end of the floor. Similarly, this multi-tier arrangement may be deployed to control a variety of other remote units described in the patent application, such as thermostats or security cameras. The pending claims are directed to this multi-tier communications system to control one or more types of remote units.

Consider claim 34, for example. Claim 34 calls for a multi-tier system comprising a processor-based host adapted to control a remote unit and a first-tier base station communicatively coupled to the host. The multi-tier system includes a first second-tier base

station communicatively coupled to the first-tier base station, and a second second-tier base station wirelessly coupled to the first second-tier base station, wherein the second second-tier base station is intermediate the first second-tier base station and the remote unit. The first second-tier base station is capable of communicating with the second second-tier base station without an intervening first-tier base station. In the multi-tier system of claim 34, the host is adapted to control the remote unit through the first-tier base station, which communicates with the first second-tier base station, which further communicates with the second second-tier base station, which communicates with the remote unit.

Mahany fails to teach or disclose one or more of the features of claim 34. Mahany does not disclose a first-tier base station that is coupled to a first second-tier base station, which is then further coupled to another second-tier base station to control a remote unit. For example, Figure 1b of Mahany teaches a first-tier base station 33 that is capable of communicating with two second-tier base stations 35, 36. However, in Mahany, the two second-tier base stations (MCDs 35, 36) do not communicate with each other without the intervening first-tier base station 33, as called for by claim 34. Thus, the MCDs 35, 36 of Mahany cannot be coupled to extend, for example, the range of communication as is possible by the described invention. Similarly, in Figure 1c, the MCDs 62-66 cannot communicate with each other without the intervening base stations 56-59.

For at least the above reason, claim 34, as well as the claims depending therefrom, is allowable. Furthermore, the dependent claims recite additional features that are not taught or suggested by any of the applied references. For example, claim 35 calls for the second second-tier base station entering a sleep mode, and providing an indication to the remote unit before

entering the sleep mode. None of the applied references teach this feature. Similarly, other claims recite additional features that are missing from the claimed limitations.

Claim 47 is allowable at least because it calls for the first second-tier base station to provide the control signal received from the first-tier base station to the second second-tier base station. None of the applied references teach at least this limitation. Claim 48 is further allowable for the additional featured recited therein.

In light of the arguments presented above, Applicants respectfully assert that claims 34-48 are allowable. In light of the arguments presented above, a Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the undersigned attorney hereby requests an interview with the Examiner to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



Date: July 29, 2003



23720

PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

Ruben S. Bains, Reg. No. 46,532
WILLIAMS, MORGAN & AMERSON, P.C.
10333 Richmond, Suite 1100
Houston, Texas 77042
(713) 934-7000
(713) 934-7011 (facsimile)
ATTORNEY FOR APPLICANT(S)